The Interspecies Newsletter

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What The Raven Said

This piece appeared in the newsletter several years ago although in a much simplified form. It will show up in my next book, Not Talking to Beluga, *about an IC expedition to the Arctic in 1988, to be published late next year by Henry Holt. The action unfolds on the estuary of the MacKenzie River along the coast of Northern Canada. It represents one of the two or three most powerful interspecies meetings of my life.*

A raven glides in low off the plain, lands ten feet in front, walks right up to me. I sit up tall and stare. The bird pulls its head back but moves not an inch. He is not very large by raven standards, perhaps the size of a small, dressed chicken. I decide, for no good reason, that it's a male. He is standing so close to me I might reach out and touch him. I decide against it. His long scimitar beak could render real damage to my hand if he found offense. I resist attempting a pat until we know each other a little better. He cocks his long beaked face this way and that as if trying to figure out the best way a bird whose eyes are arranged on each side of his head might stare directly into the eyes of a human whose eyes are set on a flat plane. I wonder if the creature may actually solve what is to my mind an insoluble problem of eye contact, because it soon starts croaking and squawking and cooing in a whispery, soothing tone meant only for my ears.

I suddenly recall a few lines from the Poe I memorized in High School. The bird ceases its cooing as I recite the opening lines of "The Raven" in a gently-modulated whisper.

Once upon a midnight dreary,
while I pondered weak and weary,
over many a quaint
and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping,
suddenly there came a tapping.

The raven coos again. Searches my eyes. He seems to be waiting for me to vocalize again. The Poe seems silly, a cliche as flat as the peat plain that spreads out in front me. Then I get an idea, rush to my tent, search a pocket of my pack to extricate a small bamboo Jew's harp made by an Ainu craftsman in Northern Japan. I sit beside the raven, hold the harp against my lips and

start plucking it back and forth with the thumb of my left hand. "Boing, bo...boing, boing, boing, boing, bo...boing" goes the harp in syncopated four-four time. The raven moves a step closer. He seems genuinely curious, as if he listens closely enough he just might pick up a new riff or two to add to his own wide repertoire of sounds. He abruptly starts croaking from deep inside his gullet. The sound reminds me of a housecat from a parallel unviverse who purrs his contentment two octaves below and at half the speed of a normal housecat. Twenty, perhaps thirty minutes pass, a veritable eternity in the annals of interspecies music-making. But we two are still at it. The blend of baritone purring and boing-boings reminds me of a

didgeridoo accompanying an overtone singer from Tuva.

Finally I'm played out. Need a break. Get up to take a long walk out on the plain. The raven flies twenty feet behind and ten feet above me, the sound of its wingbeats adds an catchy counterpoint to the thud of my sneakers pressing the earth. Then it flies ahead and lands where it thinks I am sure to follow. This I usually do, quite willingly surrendering whatever subliminal itinerary I might have to the birds own. If I head off in another direction, mostly to be contrary, I justify it in my mind as "an experiment in interspecies communication," the bird squawks and takes to the air to follow me.

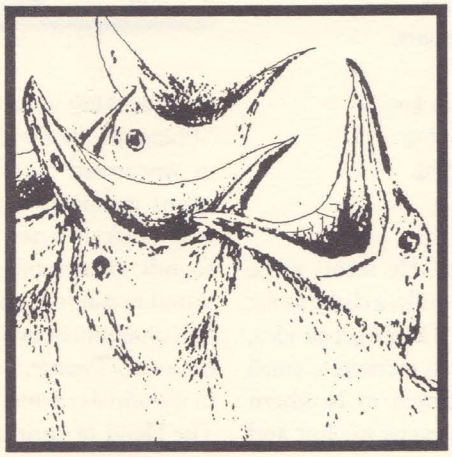
I return to camp three hours later. The raven is still with me. He stands on the dirt right beside me as I cozy up to a smoldering campfire and breathe the coals to life. He's clearly not afraid of the fire. I heat water, make hot chocolate. Drink it down. Then enter my tent to sleep for three hours. The raven is standing outside the tent when I awake. By now, I feel flattered by his companionship. No, *honored* is the more appropriate word. Still, I am not yet vain enough to disallow for the fact that all our food is kept in several white buckets stored by the side of my own tent.

The bird does something very curious. It flies off the bluff and hides in a willow thicket beside the shore when my companion, Jonathan, strides into the makeshift kitchen beside my tent to fix a sandwich and brew a cup of coffee. I mention nothing about the raven. The bird rejoins me again within a minute of Jonathan's departure.

Immanuel Kant wrote that the human hand is the most visible aspect of the human sensibility. That may explain why human beings are creatures of hands and fingers that long to touch and feel and caress their environment. Unfortunately, the fulfillment of our longing has developed into one of humanity's most detrimental traits. That which we touch we too often alter for our own utility. To the many species of animals that need unadulterated ecosystems to prosper, human alteration of habitat must be understood–in the gut if not always in the mind–as an augury of their own destruction. Most animals seem to know this fact about human hands, although most humans do not seem to know it at all. Ravens apparently know it exceedingly well because my own wandering hands soon cause a major rift in the fragile relationship that is developing between the two of us.

I'm munching my way through a stack of Ak-Mak crackers. The raven coos and clicks as his way of asking for a handout. I oblige. He takes one square at a time from right out of my palm. When the bird directs its full attention to gobbling down a square, my hand abruptly darts across our unstated boundary line to affectionately stroke its hard black bumpy back. The raven lets loose with a piercing squawk. I yank my hand out of reach of its intimidating beak and then quickly pull my body two feet backward. The raven stays where he is although now clearly in turmoil. He chitters and chatters, jerks his head to and fro, right and left, moving forward and back. Yet despite his agitation, he displays no intention whatsoever to stab at me.

I speak too him in a tone of whispery supplication that reminds me of the Bushman talking to the monkey who stole the coke bottle up in a tree in the film *The Gods Must Be* Crazy. "I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry, please believe me. I won't touch you again." The bird does not respond, but continues to jerk his head back and forth. He finally regains his composure, looks me over sideways as if he was sadly mistaken to make eye contact with such a rude person who either never learned the rules of raven protocol or, far worse, refuses to honor them. He flies off, squawking "nevermore" in the strongest raven language possible. I am devastated. What an idiot! How could I be so disrespectful?



baby ravens feeding

I'm hardly unaware that human touch is a taboo among wild animals. It might as well be the kiss of death. I'm sorry. I won't do it again. Please. Give me one more chance. The bird settles on the river bank a hundred feet away. It will take three hours of apparent nonchalance and unspoken conciliation between the two of us before he decides to venture close. But he finally relents, flies up to my side, and makes that strangest of raven calls that sounds like a drummer banging on woodblock. Once, twice, three times. I feel blessed by his proximity: a raven's way of communicating that my indecent affront is forgiven.

I am no stranger to ravens. Where I live in the Pacific Northwest, ravens are one of the most common birds although my own local ravens are at least a third again larger than this Arctic bird. They also produce a more varied repertoire of calls. To hear an unidentifiable animal calling in the woods near my home–even to hear what to most people's ears sounds like a rooster escaped from the coop–is to assume that it is being made by a raven experimenting with some new sound.

Where I live I have never heard of a raven openly mingling with a human being. This fact seems especially ironic considering the number of local Indian myths that focus on human interactions with the species. Raven was traditionally considered a trickster, the northern equal of the Southwest's Coyote, protagonist of hundreds of folk tales among indigenous people from Washington State to Siberia to Greenland who often portrayed the bird as both a comic and a malefactor who became the butt of his own jokes. Raven was generally regarded to be the first Shaman, the being who first put the sun in the sky, regulated the tides, and even created the human race and later gave it culture.

The sheer number of these myths about the human/raven bond strongly suggests that up to a hundred years ago Northern human beings and Northern ravens probably enjoyed some measure of a common dialogue. Nevermore. To the local ravens of Puget Sound, I've never been treated as an individual any more than they are individuals to me.

Call me, instead, *generic man*, perhaps the meanest-spirited and certainly the most dangerous species in all of creation. The result of my generic reputation is clear. They treat me as the personification of evil. For instance, I may occasionally attempt to emulate the local ravens vocalizing among their own kind. Their response is always immediate. They stop calling altogether and beat a hasty retreat.

It's to be expected. In the past year alone, two raven nests in my neighborhood have been felled by humans for any of several utilitarian reasons. In both cases, the presence of raven nests was not considered any good reason to keep the trees standing. Generic man did it. It's him who occasionally uses the birds for target practice. Despite the fact that this particular generic man views his own raven vocalizations to be a gesture of genuine admiration and friendship, the action always gets interpreted in the context of a hundred years of disintegrating protocol between species. Nevertheless I remain an optimist. For other generic men and women who love the raven, I offer this sound advice: keep squawking, rasping, hissing, knocking on wood. Something's got to give eventually. Maybe not today or tomorrow. Maybe your own, or somebody else's great grandchildren will notice a difference in a hundred years.

Gift Giving

Out here on the huge Delta of the MacKenzie River in Arctic canada, it's midnight. The sun has transformed into a sliver traveling across the northern horizon. The land basks golden-red in its eerie light. The wind is strong tonight. The sides of my tent roar and snap like a whip as I unzip it and climb inside. I ordinarily keep the tent tightly sealed to keep out the hordes of mosquitoes. Tonight the wind is keeping them grounded better than anything I might accomplish with zippers and unguents so I have opened the tent a crack at the bottom in an attempt to equalize the air currents inside and out. The tent immediately stops snapping. I lie down, must fall into a dream because I am soon awakened by a jab and a tickle on my shoulder. I open an eye and notice my new friend the raven. He is glaring down at me from a perch on the metal frame of my pack. That scimitar beak, three inches long and black as coal is just above my face. I instinctively place my hand in front of my eyes, pull my face back. He touched me? Is that what he did? Touched *me*? "So, you've decided to up the ante." I laugh heartily just to be heard over the noise of the fierce wind buffeting the tent.

He is cooing in that same plaintive whisper of his while poking his beak at the pack. "A few crackers will do it, please." Is that what he wants? Asking me to open the top zipper to liberate the round, salty crisps that we both know lies just inside? I nod my head, reach up, unzip the pack without moving it, find the cracker box with my fingers, extricate it, zip up the pack, open the lid of the box, unfold the plastic inner wrapper and grab a handful of rough brown corrugated crackers. The bird reaches daintily from his perch on the frame. Selects a single cracker. I feel blissful that a wild animal would honor me with such a close encounter.

Unfortunately, at the very moment of our mutual interspecies triumph a substantial glob of white goo squirts from the ravens hindquarters right onto the zipper of my pack. Now it's my turn to react without pre-meditation. I let loose with a scream so shrill that, truthfully, it would only be justified if the pack cloth were sizzling into a smoky slag from contact with the odious juices emitted by such a vile scavenger. I feel enraged, but also a bit frightened. I point lividly at the mess, then at the bird who suddenly seems to have quadrupled in size. He flaps his wings. They have grown to fifty feet wide.

"Get out of here! Get out! Leave!! RIGHT NOW!" I scream, raising a hand to throw the first projectile I can grab which, in this case, is a handful of crackers. They spin across the length of the tent like a drizzle of frisbies, and thud against the screen. The bird appears mostly unfazed by this display of weaponry, perhaps interprets the sudden appearance of so many crackers as a just trade for his own murky deposit. But something of my annoyance has clearly been communicated. He jumps lightly off his

Raven Stealing the Sun (traditional)

perch, waddles across my sleeping bag-covered legs, picks up a single cracker, delicately lifts the tent screen with his beak, and ducks through the hole.

I break off a piece of toilet paper, clean up the sticky mess, and then toss the soiled paper out the hole. An hour passes in the golden Arctic night. I regret my response and begin to wonder if there might have been any special significance to the fact that the raven defecated precisely on the zipper pull? What do I know? Defecation could be a raven's most deferential response to an offer of food, the analog to a human curtsy, a bow and a thank you very much. What if he was simply trying to tell me in his most erudite manner that, "Ah yes, my dear fellow two-legged. Allow me, a most grateful raven, to poop most fullsomely on your zipper as a gesture of my humble esteem?"

Forgiveness

Deena Metzger has written that animals are different intelligences, each species holding and expressing a body of knowledge in its own manner, each species different in its knowing and responding to the world. Yet in so many ways the raven and I are alike. Subtle gestures made by either one of us to display respect and friendship and ultimately meant to elevate our relationship to a new level are not understood at all by the other. Gestures of no consequence whatsoever get interpreted by the other party as uncouth impudence. We two are bumblers, the interspecies odd couple, inadvertant perpetrators and,

consequently, overreacting victims of our own species-specific behavior patterns. Yet we long to connect. This is clear. Both of us striving to cultivate the novel camaraderie that binds us to this place at this time.

Apparently, both know to forgive.

The wind stops. The mosquitoes return. I zip up the bottom flap of the tent then sleep, dream, waken, nibble, read, sleep again. The raven's black silhouette remains stooped in a submissive pose just beyond the closed-up tent screen. I wonder why I haven't seen another raven since this one arrived on the scene yesterday. Is it coincidence? Or do I belong to him alone. Maybe he considers me his brother, his conquest, his provider. His possession.

His pet.

Morning arrives. The sun sits high in the southeast quadrant of the sky. I continue to doze on and off over the next several hours. The raven continues to sway and coo, still trying to win me over with whispery supplications, seduce me to open the zipper. "Please, my very good friend," he coos, "Tell me what I have done to deserve such a snub. You must know, of course, that I meant nothing by it. Let bygones be bygones. And why not? Let me linger in the tent awhile. Perhaps share another cracker. Have a good talk about the deeper meaning of life."

Half the time I doze, half the time I lie on my back examining the effects of sunlight filtered through the green ripstop nylon. Thousands of mosquito bodies bump up against the tent fabric. With my eyes closed it sounds just like rain. One moment I see the face of my old high school English teacher telling the class that Poe's own raven was a symbol of Death. This image harkens back to the middle ages when ravens were considered the pets of witches. That explains why a raven is the companion of the evil queen in *Snow White*. The Catholic Church, in particular, saddled the raven with so much diabolical baggage because this raucus midnight-black scavenger that picks over the bones of the dead also has a keen intellect.

Ornithologists tell us that ravens possess as great a variety of calls as any parrot, mockingbird, or mynah. Many raven calls correlate with behavior and, thus suggest at least the rudiments of language. Ravens are also notoriously mechanical, the engineers and physicists of the avian world. in the wild they have been observed pouring water from a cup onto dry objects to plump them up before eating them. In captivity they have been observed placing solid objects in a cup of water to raise the level to where they can get a drink.

Someone might even read this story and conclude that my own raven knows the meaning of life. Of course, I can offer no proof of this heady idea, although more than once over the past several hours of our interaction I, myself, have believed this to be the secret message contained in his gentle cooing. This belief certainly raises the stakes of our meeting. It leads me to a state of reverie. The dreamtime. A land where myth holds sway.

Can a Raven Write?

I sleep and then I wake. Then I sleep again. Then a new phase. Ostensibly morning. My eyes finally open wide for good, or at least for another full day. I hear the prying open of a food bucket outside the tent, followed by the rhythmical priming of the camp stove. Is it possible? The raven is pumping our propane stove?

I rush outside the tent to encounter Jonathan sitting on the ground staring placidly into a bowl of granola he holds like a robin egg in the nest of his gargantuan hands. I search the premises, look among the buckets. Get up to search behind the tent. Finally let my eyes wander across the plain. Nothing. The raven is gone.

When I ask Jonathan if he transformed himself into a raven last night, he peers at me with a quizzical smile, then grins, "Oh yah, sure, a shape shifter. It was me all along."

I sit down, tell him of my experience. He nods, eats a few spoonfuls of granola, then uncorks a story he recently heard from a local Inuit named Thomasie Cowcharlie.

"Thomasie was out hunting in the bush about 200 miles south of here when a raven suddenly arrived in his camp. Just like your bird, this one also began turning his head this way and that, cooing, and whispering, as if trying to communicate. Thomasie made no response, so the raven flew off, returning a moment later with a stick in his mouth. Then the strangest thing happened. The raven started tracing distinct figures in the dirt, pausing a few times to stare into the man's face, perhaps searching for some sign of recognition."

Jonathan's droopy face displays nothing. He takes another bite, then continues. "I always thought it was really too bad that guy didn't copy the figures down on paper. I'd be very curious to see what they looked like." My hunch is they looked like scratches. You know, like cuneiform. The first human writing.

Jonathan finishes his breakfast. He looks me in the eye and tells me that its time we left this place. His tone implies that it's not some whim of his to leave but, rather, that we *must* leave. Our time is up. I don't ask him to explain, it's never been his manner to buoy up his formidable intuitive sense with mere logic.

I request that we stay a few more hours. He nods concurrence, although a few minutes later I notice him dissembling his tent. I sit quietly, eat my oatmeal with maple syrup and dried apricots plumped up from letting them sit overnight in a bowl full of water. I grab my journal, start perusing yesterday's entries.

At the very end I discover a single sentence that, for the life of me, I can not remember writing. It must have been entered sometime during those long hours I spent half sleeping, half waking. It reads:

What would this being and I have left to talk about after ten thousand years camped in this spot.

—Jim Nollman, December 1995

Interspecies Showtime

A few times each year over the past several years, IC founder Jim Nollman has gathered together a collection of slides and tapes to present a multimedia lecture about the work and the vision of Interspecies Communication. Typically, this presentation is given at conferences, university

classes, and cultural centers around the world.

After a very successful tour of Japan last June, giving the same talk to larger and larger audiences, Nollman decided it was time to upgrade the basic academic and informational format of the presentation. He wanted to transform it into something much more like a performance that grabbed an audience emotionally as well as intellectually. Instead of merely talking about communicating with animals, perhaps showing pretty slides and informative maps of exotic locales, or asking an audience to sit quietly and simply listen to various tape recorded examples of music with animals, he started to explore more vibrant ways of presenting the same basic message. He experimented with live music, dance, mime, ceremony, and especially audience participation to better demonstrate the interspecies premise.

Now, IC is excited to announce that we have put together a stage show. Entitled *The Wild Heart*, our show will make its debut as a headliner at the fifth ICERC dolphin and whale conference being held in Brussels in May 1996.

In *The Wild Heart*, Nollman takes off his mortarboard and picks up an electric guitar, a tone drum, and jawharp. He becomes a guide for the audience, a kind of interspecies *Everyman* who talks about the personal yearning to synchronize the beat of his own overcivilized heart more closely with nature's rhythms. Using slides, songs, and tapes, he grants his audience a ticket to the places around the world he has interacted with wild animals.

Performance artist, Christian Swenson, joins Nollman onstage to perform *The Wild Heart*. Swenson has an extensive background in mime and dance and has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. In *The Wild Heart*, he transforms himself into the archetype of whale, raven, wolf, turkey, dolphin, rose, hummingbird, water, air to interact with our Everyman. Together, the two artists lead their audience to a charged locale where humans and animals really do interact with one another, if sometimes only for the briefest of moments. Immersing themselves in the ceremonial rhythm of interaction, they recreate, on stage, the profound energy that drives such close encounters between species. Interaction may sometimes be friendly, sometimes poignant, but it can also be ferocious, even dangerous. Sometimes the encounter between species is so subtle—as is the case with healing herbs like echinacea—that the two men show it through metaphor and myth. They even act it out in slow motion.

It has been said that what the ecology movement lacks most is a sense of aesthetics. *The Wild Heart* attempts to bridge the wide perceptual gulf that currently separates the mainstream of contemporary art and Media with wild nature. If the environmental crisis is, indeed, a crisis in perception, this performance presents a vision of a new perception and a new impulse to help guide us into the future. *The Wild Heart* defines and perhaps purifies the fundamental longing we all feel to link our lives more closely with nature.

The Wild Heart will tour Europe in May 1996 with a substantial percentage of the proceeds going directly to IC. IC is now accepting engagements in the United States for Fall 1996.

Tuva and Humpbacks

Tuva is a part of Mongolia, north of China and Tibet, where a nomadic culture has developed a unique form of singing, sometimes referred to as *Homie*. The Tuvans sing from deep within their throats to generate overtones, composed of two distinct notes at the same time. It is said that the low tone is made with the throat while the high harmony is generated by the rest of the body.

The best of these overtone singers are actually able to control the placement of the individual notes in space. Some singers actually "throw" parts of the overtone above their head or to the right or left like a ventriloquist. The overall effect is uncanny, even chilling. A part of the harmony seems to float and even move above the head of the singer, as if created by a disembodied presence.

French film maker and World Beat music producer, Martin Meissonier, is now working with IC, to bring a group of Tuvan Shamans and singers onto a ship in Southeast Alaska to attempt their unique brand of singing with the humpback whales who inhabit Frederick Sound in great numbers during the summer months. Martin is eminently qualified for this immense task of planning, having produced several albums of traditional music from several African tribes and including world tours by King Sunny Ade.

The match of Tuvan singers and humpbacks may seem bizarre, but in fact there are many overlapping reasons to attempt this collaboration of voices. Firstly, the humpbacks own vocalizations, devoid of their context, sound strikingly similar to the Tuvan chants. More importantly, Tuvan overtone singing is said to have originally been invented by herdspeople

attempting to communicate directly to their camels and yaks. Being indigenous nomads, the Tuvan people are completely reliant on their pack animals.

As we go to press, another synchronous thread has woven its way into this strange story. We will be given a prelude of how Tuvan music will affect the whales this February when IC journeys out to sea to some, as yet unspecificied site. The Japanese magazine SWITCH, is funding much of this venture in trade for an interview. The SWITCH interviewer, Jun Nakano, is (by coincidence?) Japan's foremost proponent of *Homie* music, who occasionally performs concerts of overtone singing in Tokyo.

In Brief

● From the Aries Newsletter, (now out of print) comes this item:

Free Speech Out of Season. You can burn an American flag and you can march around wearing sheets and burning crosses. You can shoot an arrow into a deer's eyeball. That's legal. It is illegal however to speak the words, "I don't think you should shoot an arrow into a deer's eyeball." In the the state of Maryland, it is illegal to "interfere" with a hunter by speaking to him.

● From the very occasional Project Interlock Newsletter:

Queensland has become surprisingly popular among humpback whales. About 698 whales passed Moreton Island last year on their annual migration from the Antarctic to breed off the North Queensland coast. This is almost double the number counted in 1982. When whaling ceased in Australia in 1962, there were fewer than 200 humpback whales.

Dr. Michael Bryden of the University of Queensland finds the figures puzzling. "It's impossible for these whales, which have a 12 month gestation period to increase their population by more than 20% per year. There are two possible explanations for the abnormal increase. Some whales may not journey north each winter, or whales that normally do so via New Zealand may, for some reason, have joined the trans-Tasman group last year."

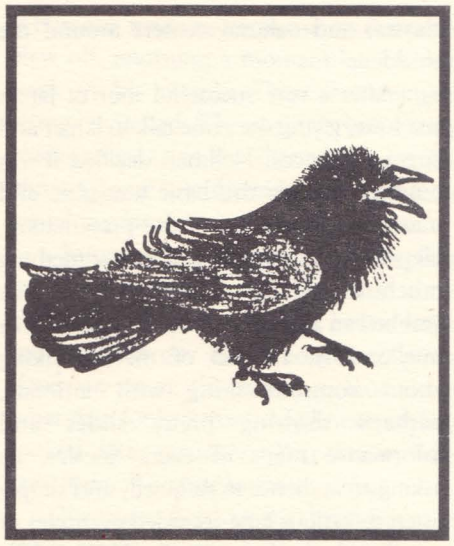
● From the AP wires:

Three men thrown from their yacht in shark-infested waters off South Africa's eastern coast were rescued by dolphins, the Johannesburg Star recently reported.

One of the men, Peter Stock, said the boat capsized in turbulent seas. His two sailing companions fell in the water while he clung to the overturned boat. A pod of dolphins appeared and guided his companions in waters where they had seen sharks the previous day. Some of the dolphins stayed with the men until they reached shore safely. "The other dolphins", said Stock, "stayed with me until I managed to clamber back on board when the yacht was heading for the surf. I was in the water for two hours acting as a sort of rudder and the dolphins protected and guided me toward shore."

● From an unknown source:

Researchers at the Long Term Research Institute in Lincoln Mass and Cornell University analyzed more than 500 humpback whale songs during the last twelve years. They broke the songs down to units distinguishable to humans, and found phrases, subphrases, and themes, and even rhymes similar to those in



human music. Their report was in the journal Ethology.

Rhymes appearing in the whale songs seemed to be used mostly in the longer, more complex songs. The researchers speculated the whales use rhymes as devices to remember the songs, which can last from five minutes to a half hour.

● From the San Francisco Examiner, July 26, 1993

In a collaboration made possible by the end of the Cold War, the navy has joined forces with whale researchers to explore the secret lives of whales. At a briefing at the Naval Research Laboratory outside washington DC, Cornell University researcher Chris Clark said,"For the first time, we have ears on the bottom of the ocean–a listening range that covers the entire Atlantic Ocean.

Among other things, Clark said, teams have verified what researchers have long suspected–that some whales can communicate over the entire Atlantic Ocean. In a single hour of listening with Navy staff–actually watching spectrograms of sound on a computer screen–Clark said he was able to tap into more whale sounds than have ever been recorded in scientific literature. "There were tens of thousands in a week from which we have identified six species."

Some Navy analysts have begun to pick out the voices of individual whales, such as the blue whale known as *Old Blue*.

Hydrophones first picked up Old Blue off Massachusetts on Feb 18 and followed its travels south toward Bermuda, where it stopped for two weeks to hang out with several other blue whales. After heading as far south as Florida, the whale turned and swam to a spot just north of Bermuda where Old Blue was last heard March 31.

Clark also said that much of the whale sounds they are hearing are so low and deep that the sound is inaudible to the human ear. The whale sounds literally flood the ocean—rather like the animal sounds the fill the air in the rain forests.

● From the Seattle Times, June 4, 1995:

Citing an 1855 treaty that makes them the only Indian nation with whale hunting rights guaranteed by the federal government, The Makah of the Washington state coastline have announced plans to kill up to five gray whales every spring, beginning next year. A whale hunt, would provide, they say, focus for a tribe where unemployment is 50% and the fishing fleet has been hit hard by declining slmon runs.

The Makah plan has caused an international stir and a problem for the US State Department. For more than a decade, the US government has led the campaign to outlaw commercial whaling around the globe. The Makah contend that there is a big distinction between their proposal and commercial whaling. The Indians want to take whales for subsistence and ceremonial purposes, not as a commercial operation.

But opponents say it smacks of hypocrisy to allow one group of people to hunt whales but to condemn others claiming the same right—as do those in Iceland and Norway for instance. The State Department also points out that in Western Canada, more than a dozen other native tribes also show a tradition of whaling. If the Makah do begin taking whales,next spring, The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has vowed to put it's own whale-saving boats between the Makah and the whales.

There are about 21,000 gray whales—the highest number in over a century. Last year they were taken off the federal list of endangered species.

NOAA vs. Dolphin Swims

A few years ago several swimmers were arrested in Kealekekua Bay for swimming too near the spinner dolphins who frequent the coast. One swimmer, Sharon Ennis was outraged enough by the government response that she became the only defendent demanding a trial in lieu of simply bowing to the very expensive fine.

The government agency presenting the case, hid a cameraman in some trees near shore to videotape the interaction between dolphins and swimmers. At the trial they called on the expertise of four field officers, a lawyer, and a graduate student "expert". No matter, Sharon won handily when the judge threw out the case for lack of evidence.

Sharon asked me to write an affidavit in her defense which is herein reprinted:

I was saddened to hear that NOAA has modified its interpretation of laws concerning the harassment of dolphins, with the result that it has taken its bureaucratic ire out on Sharon Ennis personally. With 20,000 dolphins being killed each year by the tuna industry as a NOAA-sanctioned "incidental kill", the very idea of persecuting a few happy swimmers who possess enough benign intent to attract wild dolphins to their side seems a travesty of justice.

In my professional work as a musician researching communication with wild cetaceans, I have interacted with dolphins off the coast of Hawaii several times. In the course of this work, I have had dealings with licensing agents for the Marine Mammal Agency. One federal agent in Honolulu assured me that as long as the music attracted the dolphins, rather than vice versa, no law was being broken.

All the evidence clearly suggests that something similar to my own approach occurred in the case now before the Court. How could human swimmers ever hope to get anywhere close to dolphins unless the dolphins themselves were complicit? Dolphins can swim up to thirty miles an hour. They will do so when threatened. Yet on the NOAA video we clearly see dolphins staying very near to the human swimmers for a half hour or more. They swim directly toward the swimmers on several occasions.

With all the highly-publicized problems of people in fast powerboats and jet skis harassing whales, people swimming from shore to be near dolphins would seem ludicrous if the fines were not so stiff.

Dolphins have been documented enjoying the company of human swimmers since the days of the ancient Greeks. What is occurring today at Kealekekua Bay is in the same spirit of all these historical interactions.

The real issue here may actually lie with a few government scientists who wish to retain access and control over "their dolphins". I recently interviewed a government scientist up in the Canadian Arctic who told me that, in his opinion, laymen should never be permitted access to cetaceans in the wild. I believe that statement may also clarify NOAA's hidden agenda in this case.

Bequests

To any of our supporters who would like to assure the longterm health of Interspecies Communication Inc, one option is to enclose this provision in your will:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Interspecies Communication Inc. a non-profit corporation located in the state of Washington, the sum of $_____ and/or (specifically described property.)"

We welcome any inquiries you may have. In cases where you have specific wishes about the disposition of your bequest, we suggest you discuss such provisions with your attorney.